

Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program

Information for recipients who applied for the first time on or after April 23, 2009

Purpose

The purpose of the *Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program* is to:

- Attract outstanding students to major in teacher shortage areas at the teacher education programs at Nebraska colleges and universities;
- Retain resident students and graduates as teachers in Nebraska schools; and
- Establish a scholarship (loan contract) that requires a borrower to obtain employment as a Nebraska teacher upon graduation from a college or university.

Eligibility

An eligible student is one who:

- Is a full-time student who is enrolled in 24 semester undergraduate credit hours or 18 semester graduate credit hours of classroom, laboratory, clinical, practicum, or independent study coursework in a 12-month period;
- Is enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate teacher education program at an eligible Nebraska institution that is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, has a teacher education program accredited by the State Department of Education, and, if a privately funded college or university, has not opted out of the program pursuant to rules and regulations;
- Is majoring in a teacher shortage area, as determined annually by the Commissioner of Education;
- Is working towards his/her initial certificate to teach in Nebraska;
- Is a resident student, as defined in Section 85-502 R.R.S. or, if enrolled in a privately funded eligible institution, would be deemed a resident student if enrolled in a state-funded eligible institution;
- Has a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 or has graduated in the top quarter of his or her high school class;
- Agrees to complete the teacher education program that he or she is enrolled in and to complete the major on which his or her eligibility is based; and
- Commits to become certified with an endorsement in a teacher shortage area and teach in an accredited or approved public or private Nebraska school at least a portion of the time in said teacher shortage area.

Amount of Loan

Eligible students can apply, on an annual basis, for loans in an amount of not more than \$3,000 per year. Students can apply for, and receive, loans annually for up to five (5) years. Students must complete and submit a new application annually.

Application Deadline

Completed applications must be submitted, or postmarked, no later than **December 1** of each year in which funds are available to the administrator responsible for the teacher education program which has admitted the student.

Loan Forgiveness Obligation*

If the loan recipient successfully completes the teacher education program and major, becomes certified, is employed as a teacher in a Nebraska school within six months of graduation, and otherwise meets the requirements of the signed contract between the student applicant and the State Department of Education, loans will be forgiven in the following manner, beginning after the first two years of teaching full-time:

- Each year of teaching will forgive up to \$3,000.
- Each year of teaching in a school district that is at least partially in a local system classified in the very sparse cost grouping, as determined by the State Department of Education, will forgive up to \$6,000.
- Each year of teaching in a school building in which at least 40% of students qualify for the poverty factor, as determined by the State Department of Education, will forgive up to \$6,000.

Repayment

If the recipient does not meet the loan forgiveness obligations described above, then the loan must be repaid, with interest accruing as of the date the borrower signed the contract.

For more information about the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program, please contact Karen Buller, Nebraska Department of Education, at 402-471-4837 or karen.buller@nebraska.gov.

*For purposes of this loan program, the definition of teacher means “any certified employee who is regularly employed for the instruction of pupils pursuant to Section 79-101 R.R.S.” This definition does not include administrators, library media specialists, school guidance counselors, school psychologists, or other special services certificate holders who function exclusively in positions requiring these endorsements. Those individuals who enter into these fields of education will not be eligible for loan forgiveness.